

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9806

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 1768

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, NZ

SUBJECT: QUARTERLY OPINION POLL

REF: WELLINGTON 1178

1. QUARTERLY OPINION POLL TAKEN MED-MAY (PRIOR TO PRESENTATION OF BUDGET) SHOWS NATIONAL PARTY MAINTAINING EDGE OVER LABOUR WITH 46 PERCENT TO 43 PERCENT MARGIN. SOCIAL CREDIT AND VALUES PARTIES RECEIVED SUPPORT OF FIVE AND SIX PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS, RESPECTIVELY. SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL REMAINED STEADY WHILE LABOUR SHOWED ONE PERCENT INCREASE. POSS REPRESENTS FIRST TIME SINCE DEATH OF NORMAN KIRK THAT LABOUR HAS NOT LOST GROUND VIS-A-VIS NATIONAL.

2. PRIME MINISTER ROWLING AND OPPOSITION LEADER MULDOON BOTH IMPROVED THEIR STANDING. ROWLING WAS LISTED AS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE LABOUR POLITICIAN BY 50 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS, UP CONSIDERABLY FROM THE 41 PERCENT TOTAL GIVEN HIM IN THE MARCH POLL AND ONE PERCENT HIGHER THAN THE STRONGEST SHOWING EVER MADE BY NORMAN KIRK AS PRIME MINISTER. MR. MULDOON WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST IMPRESSIVE OPPOSITION POLITICIAN BY 40 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS. MULDOON HAD A SIMILAR RATING IN MAY 1974 BUT DROPPED TO A LOW OF 30 PERCENT IN SEPTEMBER 1974. HE HAS STEADILY IMPROVED HIS POSITION SINCE THEN.

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3. INFLATION IS THE MAIN CONCERN OF 31 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC

AND THE ECONOMY APART FROM INFLATION THE MAIN CONCERN OF 24 PERCENT. WHILE THE TOTAL PERCENTAGE ACCORDED THESE TWO ISSUES HAS REMAINED MORE OR LESS CONSTANT SINCE MAY 1974 THERE HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE CHANGE IN RELATIVE EMPHASIS. IN MAY 1974 INFLATION WAS THE MAJOR CONCERN OF 49 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED AND THE ECONOMY APART FROM INFLATION WAS THE MAJOR CONCERN OF ONLY FOUR PERCENT.

4. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND MR. MULDOON HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR POSITIONS WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES AND ARE, THEREFORE, IN STRONGER POSITIONS TO INFLUENCE PARTY POLICIES. THE INCREASE IN CONCERN ABOUT THE ECONOMY APART FROM INFLATION MAY REFLECT THE IMPACT OF MR. MULDOON'S CONTINUING CAMPAIGN TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON WHAT HE TERMS LABOUR'S MISHANDLING OF THE ECONOMY. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL RESEARCH BUREAU, WHICH CONDUCTED THE POLL, THE FIGURES ARE SUBJECT TO A MAXIMUM STATISTICAL SAMPLING ERROR OF PLUS OR MINUS TWO PERCENT.

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